

Oct. 7 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

Sperling for their hard work to provide this important new protection for American workers.

Statement on Senate Action on Proposed Education Appropriations *October 7, 1999*

Today the Senate passed a spending bill that woefully shortchanges America's children. The Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriation bill fails to make vital investments in our Nation's children. It undermines the commitment we made last year to hire quality teachers and reduce class size in the early grades. It underfunds after-school programs and such important efforts as the GEAR UP mentoring program.

If this bill were to come to me in its current form, I would veto it. I have already sent Congress a budget for the programs in this bill that provides for essential investments and is fully paid for. I urge Congress again to work on a bipartisan basis to develop legislation that truly strengthens public education and other key national priorities.

This bill is a catalog of missed opportunities and misguided priorities. I am particularly disappointed that the Senate defeated a common-sense measure to make schools accountable for results. The Bingaman-Reed-Kerry amendment would have set aside funds for States to turn around failing schools. By rejecting it, the Senate lost a chance to make accountability more

than just a slogan. The Senate also rejected amendments to increase the number of qualified teachers in high-need districts and to help States improve the quality of their teaching forces.

The Senate properly rejected two wrong-headed amendments that would have hurt workers. One would have barred implementation of the ergonomics rule so key to safeguarding worker health. The other would have barred enforcement of the Davis-Bacon law in natural disaster areas, a law which assures workers appropriate wages.

While the Senate did make important strides by committing to increase child-care funding next year, the bill underfunds many other efforts, including public health priorities in preventive and mental health, programs that give millions of Americans better access to health care and critical social services for vulnerable families. The bill also does not provide aid to families caring for elderly or ill relatives through the family caregiver initiative. Even worse, in expressing support for an across-the-board cut in all discretionary programs, the Senate has shown its unwillingness to address America's needs in a responsible and comprehensive way.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Reception in New York City *October 7, 1999*

Thank you. Please be seated.

Let me, first of all, thank Dennis and all of you for this event and for your support for the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee. Senator Schumer was supposed to be here tonight, but they're voting late, so he's working for you, and I'm filling in for him. *[Laughter]* That's sort of getting prepared for my life after the Presidency. I'm sort of the stand-in speaker tonight for Chuck Schumer. *[Laughter]*

I'd like to thank you again for your support for the Senators, and I'd like to thank, as I always try to do, the people of New York City and New York State for being so very good to me and the Vice President and our whole administration over these last 6½ years.

I would like to just make a brief statement about the event that we're here for. I think all of you know that we Democrats have maintained a constant commitment to the health care